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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 AID-05 TRSE-00 AGRE-00 SY-05
DOE-15 SOE-02 COME-00 /121 W
----------125486 281346Z /47
P R 281201Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8321
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 4010

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, PINS, SU
SUBJ: SUDANESE LOSING PATIENCE OVER COMMODITY SHORTAGES

REF: KHARTOUM 3659

SUMMARY: AS FLOUR, SUGAR AND GASOLINE SHORTAGES CONTINUE AND WITH CONTINUAL ELECTRIC POWER FAILURES AND OTHER DISRUPTIONS, SUDANESE PUBLIC BECOMING ANGRY AND RESTIVE. WE HAVE HAD REPORTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN SCATTERED PARTS OF COUNTRY, AND SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED EARLY FOR ID AL-FITR HOLIDAYS. IRONICALLY, WORST OF SHORTAGES MAY NOW RPT NOW BE OVER AS RAILWAY SHIPMENTS FROM PORT SUDAN HAVE BEEN RESUMED. RAINS SHOULD BE ENDING SOON AND RAMADHAN ITSELF ENDS IN FEW DAYS. HOWEVER, NIMEIRI IS DEVOTING HIS FULL ATTENTION TO SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEM. END SUMMARY
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1. SERIOUS COMMODITY SHORTAGES AND ATTENDANT SKYROCKETING OF PRICES, POWER FAILURES AND THE LIKE HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY BAD FOR PAST WEEK OR SO. PROXIMATE CAUSE WAS BREAK IN RAILWAY NEAR PORT SUDAN FOLLOWING RAINS IN RED SEA PROVINCE. IN ADDITION, DEBRIS FROM HIGH WATERS IN BLUE NILE DAMAGED ELECTRIC POWER TUJBINES IN DAMAZIN.

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COMING AT END OF RAMADHAN AND WHILE WEATHER IS ACTUALLY
WARMER THAN EARLIER IN AUGUST AND JULY, OVERALL SITUATION
HAS WORN EVEN LEGENDARY SUDANESE PATIENCE TO A FRAZZLE.

2. FOR FIRST TIME WITHIN LAST FEW DAYS WE HAVE HAD
REPORTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER ACTS IN ANGRY RESPONSE
TO SITUATION. WE UNDERSTAND THAT STUDENTS IN EL FASHER
(NORTHERN DARFUR) DEMONSTRATED AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN
TROUBLE OF SOME SORT IN ATBARA, PERHAPS INVOLVING LOOTING.
THERE WERE TO HAVE BEEN DEMONSTRATIONS BY STUDENTS IN
KHARTOUM AS WELL, BUT AUTHORITIES DECLARED ID AL-FITR
HOLIDAY EARLY. KHARTOUM, IN FACT, IS QUIET WITH NO
NOTICEABLE SPECIAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. HOWEVER MAN IN
STREET BY NOW IS FURIOUS AND FRUSTRATED. NOT ONLY DOES HE
HAVE NO RPT NO ELECTRICITY, HE CANNOT FIND ANY CANDLES TO
BUY.

3. IRONICALLY, WORST MAY BE OVER AND SITUATION SHOULD GET BETTER
SOON. WITH REPAIRS TO RAILWAY, SHIPMENTS OF URGENTLY NEEDED
PERTROLEUM PRODUCTS HAVE RESUMED. SIMILARLY, SHIPMENTS OF
FLOUR AND SUGAR WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR BAKED GOODS WHICH ARE SO
POPULAR DURING RAMADHAN AND ID HAVE ARRIVED. WE UNDERSTAND
DAMAZIN TURBINE HAS BEEN REPAIRED; THEREFORE ELECTRIC
POWER SITUATION SHOULD IMPROVE. SIMILARLY, WITH ELECTRICITY
PUMPS CAN OPERATE AND WATER SHOULD BECOME AVAILABLE AGAIN IN
HOMES. MOREOVER, BY NOW RAINY SEASON SHOULD BE ABOUT OVER,
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AND ONE HOPES THEREFORE THAT ADDITIONAL DISRUPTIONS TO
RAILWAY FROM WASHOUTS SHOULD NOT RPT NOT OCCUR. PERHAPS AS
IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICALLY, RAMADHAN WITH ITS COMBINATION OF
MENTAL STRAIN AND ADDITIONAL DEMAND FOR CERTAIN COMMODITIES
SUCH AS FLOUR AND SUGAR WILL BE OVER IN LESS THAN A WEEK.

4. NEVERTHELESS, NIMEIRI CONTINUING TO DEVOTE FULL ATTENTION
TO PROBLEMS. HE APPEARS TO HAVE CANCELLED SOME EARLY SEPTEMBER
REGIONAL TRAVEL, AND HAS MADE SEVERAL MOVES TO TIGHTEN
SITUATION. IN ADDITION, IN WELL-PUBLICIZED REMARKS TO AUGUST 27
CABINET MEETING NIMEIRI STRESSED GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY
TO ASSURE AVAILABILITY OF LIFE'S BASIC NEEDS FOR PUBLIC.
NIMEIRI HAS, IN FACT, BEGUN MOVEMENT TOWARD MORE DIRECT CONTROL
OF CRITICAL SECTORS OF ECONOMY BY HIMSELF, SMALL GROUP OF
IMMEDIATE ADVISORS AND MILITARY.

5. COMMENT: AS INDICATED REFTEL COMMODITY PROBLEMS ARE
NIMEIRI'S MOST DIFFICULT CURRENT PROBLEM, ONE WHICH COMMUNISTS
ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL TRY TO EXPLOIT. FOR AVERAGE CITIZEN
SITUATION SEEMS ONLY TO GET WORSE AND BY NOW HE IS FED-UP.
AS NOTED ABOVE, HOWEVER, THERE SHOULD BE IMPROVEMENT VERY
SOON. NIMEIRI IS TAKING SEVERAL STEPS TO ASSURE PUBLIC

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THAT HE, AT LEAST, IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO
ALLEVIATE THEIR PROBLEMS AND THAT HE IS FULLY SUMPATHETIC.
MOREOVER, HE BEGINNING TO MAKE SEVERAL INSTITUTIONAL
CHANGES AS WELL. EMBASSY REPORT DISCUSSING ECONOMIC
SITUATION IN MORE DETAIL BEING PREPARED.
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